

## **IN THE CLAIMS**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Claim 11 has been amended.

### **Listing of Claims**

Claims 1 to 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (previously presented):      A method of manufacturing tubes intended for making all or the external part of a sheathing tube for a nuclear fuel rod or a guide tube for a nuclear fuel assembly, comprising:

forming a bar of a zirconium based alloy which also contains;

0.03 to 0.25% in total firstly of iron;

secondly, at least one of the elements selected from the group consisting of chromium and vanadium;

0.8 to 1.3% of niobium;

less than 2000 ppm of tin;

500 to 2000 ppm of oxygen;

less than 100 ppm of carbon;

5 to 35 ppm of sulfur; and

less than 50 ppm of silicon;

quenching the bar in water after heating to between 1000° and 1200°C;

extruding a blank after heating to a temperature of between 600°C and 800°C;

cold-rolling said blank in at least four passes to obtain a tube, with intermediate heat treatments between 560°C and 620°C; and

applying a final heat treatment between 560°C and 620°C, all the heat treatments being applied in an inert atmosphere or under vacuum.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The method as recited in claim 7 wherein the alloy contains at most 0.20% of iron.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The method as recited in claim 7 wherein the Fe/(Cr+V) ratio is between 0.5 and 30 by weight.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The method as recited in claim 7 wherein the Fe/(Cr+V) ratio is at least 0.5 and the content of Fe+Cr+V is at least 0.03%.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method as recited in ~~any one of the~~ claim 7 wherein the oxygen content is between 1000 and 1600 ppm.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The method as recited in claim 7 wherein the final heat treatment brings the tube to a recrystallized state.